

## STORY OF PIRATE PLUNDER RECALLS DAYS OF LAFITTE

### SOME OF FREEBOOTER'S WEALTH RECOVERED

**Splendid Gem Now Owned by Brownsville, Texas, Attorney, Was Part of Accumulated Booty—Smugglers' Houses at Matamoros, Mexico, Still Stand in Magnificent Ruin.**

**Gentleman Instrumental in Discovering Hiding Place of Part of Treasure Believed That Much of It Remains Securely Concealed in the Old Rendezvous of the Buccaneers Who Did So Much to Win the Great Victory Over the British at New Orleans—Mexican Government in the Way.**

"Yes, that gem is one of the finest I have ever seen, and its strange history, to me, adds very materially to its intrinsic value."

The speaker was Mr. Pierce, a prominent attorney of Brownsville, Tex., as we sat on the broad veranda at his handsome residence, smoking our cigars, after the most remarkable January dinner I have ever eaten, writes Isaac Kline. On the menu was roast wild goose, which had been shot as it flew over the house on the day before; oysters on the half-shell, fresh from the waters of the Gulf at Point Isabel, 15 miles away; green corn on the cob, cucumbers, lettuce, celery from Mr. Pierce's own garden; oranges, figs and grapes from trees and vines in the dooryard—in January! The gem under discussion was a very fine diamond, whose steel-blue brilliance proclaimed it as having come from the Old Mines, sparkling in an old-fashioned setting on Mr. Pierce's finger.

"If I might have its entire history I should be very much pleased, for it belonged to Jean Lafitte, the pirate. If it could but speak, what a tale it might tell of former ownership by some Spanish senoritas, of the bloody sea fight which terminated in the sinking of a ship with its crimson deck burdened with the corpses of its defenders; of murder done afterwards in disposing of the wounded by the piratical custom of walking the plank; of drunken outrage and orgy at Barrataria following the piratical victory, in which very likely the fair owner of this very ring was one of the prizes. There is certainly a romance connected with this stone, and it attracts me the more for the reason that I know so little of it."

#### Lafitte's Real Character.

"Jean Lafitte is referred to in the histories as a pirate, and such he was—but from those who knew him, and with whom I have talked, I gain the impression that he was not fully entitled to that reputation, though he was a fearless fighter, with a hand of freebooters to whom his word was law, whose bravery made them a scourge of the sea 70 years ago, in these very waters. He was a Frenchman and began his career as a lieutenant on a French privateer, was captured by an English man-of-war and thrown into prison at an English port, where he was kept for many years and so barbarously treated that his resentment had a large bearing in shaping his subsequent pursuits."

"It is asserted by old residents at Matamoros who knew him that his action in betraying the English in their attempt to capture New Orleans was in retaliation for the brutalities to

of a formidable community of freebooters in Barrataria bay, about 40 miles west of the mouth of the Mississippi. They had many small vessels and the bay afforded them a secure retreat. In 1814 Commodore Patterson attacked their town and destroyed it, but Lafitte and most of his men escaped, returning later on and resuming operations."

#### Refused British Bribe.

"About the same time the British were maturing their plans for the descent upon the southern coast of the United States, and sent a brig of war, the *Sophia*, under command of Capt. Lockyer, at Barrataria, with a letter from Commodore Percy, commanding the British naval forces in the gulf, and one from Col. Nichols, then in command of the land forces in Florida, offering Lafitte the command of a fine ship and \$30,000 in gold on condition of his assisting the contemplated expedition to New Orleans. The promise of the British commander of 'bounty and beauty' to his men in case of victory is a matter of record. Lafitte immediately wrote to Gov. Claiborne of Louisiana, enclosing the two letters, which I have seen, and offering his services in defending Louisiana on the sole condition of pardon for himself and his men. The offer was accepted, and the assistance of the Barratarians under command of Lafitte, who had charge of one of the eight small cannon which constituted Jackson's artillery force at this battle, was an important factor in scoring the great victory of New Orleans, January 8, 1815. From this time the history of Lafitte is involved in obscurity. There was a piratical community formed at what is now Galveston, by a Lafitte, but whether by Jean or his brother Pierre, is now not clear. It was broken up in 1821 by Lieutenant, afterward Commodore Kearney. Lafitte's portraits, of which there are two at Matamoros, show him to have been a handsome man, over six feet tall, with black hair, hazel eyes; and his polished, easy manners and winning address are still remembered upon."

#### Pirates Were Scattered.

"After the destruction of this rendezvous the pirates scattered. Many of them are heard of afterward and are known in history. They were skilled seamen and bold fighters. Many left the sea and located at Matamoros, just across the river from Brownsville. This was then a great place for all sorts of semi-piratical exploits. Smuggling was prevalent and fortunes were made on all sides. Vessels would unload their cargoes by day or night, and the goods were often

related that their women even wore gold heels on their shoes. They entertained in princely style, giving receptions and banquets which for magnificence were not excelled even in European courts. Kings and queens of England, Spain or France gave nothing more elegant in this life. Nothing approaching this was ever given on this continent in those days, even if at the present time."

#### Entertained Prominent Men.

"All prominent people who came to Matamoros were received and entertained by them—Gen. Lawton, Gen. Corbin, the McCooks, even Gen. Sheridan—have been their guests at these receptions. Among their visitors occasionally was seen a man of magnificent bearing, great manly beauty and carriage. He wore jewels of extraordinary splendor, and always carried a court sword with an embroidered belt blazoning with jewels. I was a boy then, and remember these things well, for they were to me like a dream of the Arabian Nights. The man had with him on these visits a Spanish lady of great beauty who was always at his side. None except the Tarnava family ever talked with her, but it was a current belief among us children that the man was Lafitte and the woman a lady whom he had captured in some of his sea fights, killing her male relative, taken her to Barrataria and still held her as his wife. She was even supposed to bear a title. She attempted to escape from him twice, but

street leading to the Casa Mata, or 'house of death' in the outskirts where the prisoners were executed in the early days."

"A smaller chart on the same parchment gave a complete map of the rooms in the Casa Tarnava. In one of these rooms a spot was marked with a cross near the wall; a similar mark was placed in the basement of the house, and also in a place in the outer walls at the Casa Mata. The Chicago man, whose name I do not give for professional reasons, said that the map had never received any attention from his mother or himself because they did not really know where Matamoros was. There was no railroad to Matamoros or that locality, and neither of them ever expected to get there. Since the completion of the new St. L. & M. railway, however, he concluded to go down on one of the Homeeekers' excursions. The existence of the map recurred to his mind and he brought it along, though with little faith in its having any foundation in fact."

#### Found Chest Well Hidden.

"We visited the ruined house. The map was very accurate as regarded the apartments with the exception that the room marked with the cross did not seem to exist. By measuring the walls, however, we found an inside wall of brick—all the inner walls in this building are of brick—near a stairway, was much thicker than the others, and cut into it—and there was the treasure room. It had been built



"House of Death."

did not succeed. Her people no doubt mourned her as dead."

"After the Tarnavas left the house it was never again occupied and so far as I know has not been entered for 50 years until about a year ago. The entire premises are in ruins, as you saw, but in its prime it was as handsome as any residence on this continent. The slate roof is falling in, though the brick walls will probably stand for a century, as they are very thick and solid. The rotting balconies look down into an inner court still full of orange and fig trees laden with fruit—but I have seen this garden and the balconies lighted up at night, filled with the handsomest women wearing the finest dresses the world then contained. The high ceilings, magnificently proportioned rooms, carved spiral stairways of mahogany, large arched windows, mahogany floors—all indicate the taste of the occupants. The pigeons of the town now make it a roosting place, entering through the falling roof and the broken windows, but in its day it was a magnificent home, such as few ever enter even in this era of wealth, except the most exclusive and aristocratic. Now to the story of this ring:

#### Had Treasure Chart.

"In June, 1906, a gentleman from Chicago came to my office soliciting my assistance. He had a map or chart and a letter, of which he gave the following history: His mother, a widow, kept a boarding house 25 years ago in Chicago. Among her boarders was a man of about 60 years, who was a sailor on the lake. He had evidently cruised on salt water for many years, in fact the other sailors often talked of that, and the fact that he seemed to hold himself aloof from them; that while mixing freely with them, he would never relate any of his experiences in the past, as sailors generally love to do. This man's name was Porfirio LaFon. One night he was drowned by the wrecking of his vessel, the *Irene*, of Sandusky. His effects lay about the house for years in an old sea chest, all efforts to discover any relatives being ineffectual. In the bottom of the chest was the chart and letter, the latter stating that LaFon had been a pirate under Lafitte previous to coming to the lakes, and had, with his companions, buried a very large treasure in Matamoros. There was also some fine jewelry and a beautifully decorated dagger in the chest, and the chart. The latter I at once recognized as a partial map of the city of Matamoros in the vicinity of the Casa Tarnava or 'house of the pirates,' as it is now called, and the

into the wall in such a manner that its existence would never be suspected. Though four feet square, the stairway at the side, running to the second and third stories, prevented the extra thickness of the wall being noticed, part of the width of the room being taken off the width of the stairway. The only entrance was through the floor in the top story, the place being practically a dry well in the wall reaching clear from the top floor to the basement."

"The treasure chest, of old wood, with brass bindings and peculiar locks, remained, and we smashed it open. It was practically empty. There was a handful of Spanish and English gold coins and several jewels of which the one I wear is one, in the box and on the floor. We searched thoroughly. What we found was valued at \$4,300. The balance of the treasure, which the letter stated to be over \$75,000, had been taken by some one, possibly some accidental discoverer. The other places indicated to contain treasure were imperfect or else the places were too well hidden. Our time was limited, since it soon became noised about what we were doing and we were stopped. You know what the Mexican government is."

#### Believes Treasure Still There.

"I feel certain that the treasure is still there, if the places can be located, but do not see how that can be done without plenty of time and possibly pulling down the house. The outer walls at the Casa Mata are now obliterated and it would require a great deal of digging to locate the treasure indicated to be buried there. The letter gave the value of one as \$100,000 in jewels and the other as \$125,000 in gold. I have full belief that there is much treasure buried in this locality, by the pirates, the smugglers, the revolutionists and even those who operated here during the civil war when this was the only port the south had open for many months. The sunken place in the brick pavement of the basement at the Casa Tarnava, I think, indicates a secret passage from the well in the court to the street; but it may just as well lead to a treasure chamber."

"The cannon shot over the door in the second story? Oh, I don't know the history of that. It is my impression that it was shot in there during some of the many revolutionary fights which took place in the streets of Matamoros. It may have been planted there during the bombardment of Matamoros by Gen. Scott, and I sometimes think it was."

eral letters he would hear of another place likely to suit him, so of course he applied for it at once."

Unfortunately, when the letter was written he found that he had no stamp, that he had used the last one, and that he had no money to buy another. If he delayed writing the situation would be filled, but if he wrote at once he would be sure to get the place. What hard lines! And he had been out of work for weeks and had now come to the end of his tether. Of course those who did not know him felt sorry for this unfortunate state of affairs and would give him a stamp or the price of one."

Sometimes he would take his stand near a post office, looking ruefully at the letter after going through all his pockets, with the result that some charitable woman who was passing would ask him trouble and give him a penny or two upon his hearing his tale. It was said that he had admitted making as much as five shillings a day by this means."

Barking dogs should be taken to the pound and boasting men should be pounded."

## Spring.

The Time hath laid his mantle by  
Of wind and rain and icy chill,  
And dons a rich embroidery  
Of sunlight poured on lake and hill.  
No beast or bird in earth or sky,  
Whose voice doth not with gladness thrill,  
For Time hath laid his mantle by  
Of wind and rain and icy chill.

River and fountain, brook and rill,  
Bespangled o'er with livery gay  
Of silver droplets, wind their way.  
All in their new apparel vie,  
For Time hath laid his mantle by.

Charles of Orleans.

## HOME OF THE EASTER LILY

Flower Was Introduced Into the Islands of Bermuda by an American.



There is only one monument in the whole British colony of the Bermudas—and it is erected to the memory of an American. This fact may seem a strange thing until one has heard the story, which is really a story of the Bermuda lily, and of the man who made it possible."

Many years ago—during President Hayes' administration, in fact—Gen. Russell Hastings, who had made for himself a brilliant record during the civil war, was married in the White House at Washington. He and his bride went to Bermuda on their wedding trip, and were so charmed with the beauty of the place that they resolved then and there to return, and, if possible, to make it their permanent abode. The climate, too, appealed to them. (The general had been seriously wounded in the war, and was far from well.)

A little later the two came again. Not as tourists this time, but as home-seekers. In those days the now-existing law that none but English citizens can own land in English colonies was not in force. So General Hastings had no difficulty in acquiring a large estate. He chose a picturesque site in the little city of Hamilton, surrounding a landlocked bay. Here he built his home, "Sonet," which stands to-day among tropical trees and luxuriant flowers.

Not only did General Hastings at once become deeply interested in the place, and in the possibilities for its development, but he was genuinely distressed at the poverty of the islanders, says a writer in the *Detroit Free Press*. Settling about to improve matters, he studied the climatic conditions, experimented again and again, and at length his efforts were crowned with success. It was found that our present-day Easter lily, originally a native of Japan, would attain in Bermuda to a perfection of loveliness hitherto unknown. The islanders were soon pressed into service, and since about 1876 the culture of lilies has been not only their chief pride, but their chief means of livelihood as well.

Imagine a tiny group of islands, far out in the Atlantic—the largest of them about 15 miles long and not wider, at most, than a mile and a half—set beneath the bluest of blue skies, and seeming to rest on water whose transparency and brilliancy of color are unequalled anywhere. This is Bermuda, the home of the Easter lily.

As the incoming boat skirts the

shore, the lily fields look from a distance like white summer clouds dropped down from the sky upon the green islands. Lily fragrance fills the air and is blown by the wind far out over the water. Coming nearer you see the fields more clearly—rows upon rows of blossoms, tall, stately and snowy white. It is very beautiful.

It was not until the early '80's that the Bermuda lily became well known in the United States. It is said that a Philadelphia woman, returning from the islands, brought home a plant to bloom. This came to the attention of W. K. Harris, an enterprising florist of the Quaker city, who purchased a lot of the bulbs, from which he succeeded in raising hundreds of plants introducing them under the name *Lilium Harrisii*. Thus the Easter lily industry spread to America, and to other countries as well. But nowhere do the flowers grow so perfect and beautiful as under the quickening warmth of the tropical sun of Bermuda.

Ordinarily only bulbs are exported but at the rush season whole boat loads of cut buds and of thickly-budded plants are packed and shipped away, carrying the sweet message of the Easter lily into countless homes and churches.

General Hastings is dead. In spite of his long residence in Bermuda, he remained a devotedly loyal American citizen and from time to time concerned himself with public affairs, holding various positions of responsibility and honor. The islanders remember him as their friend and benefactor, and that they and those that come after them may not be unmindful of the debt of gratitude they owe, a beautiful monument has been recently erected in Hamilton in his memory.



Believed World Hatched From Egg. Since remotest times the egg has symbolized recreation. Persian tradition has it that the world was hatched from an egg at the season which corresponds to the vernal equinox; for which reason eggs are still given for New Year's presents by the Persians. The Druids said that the sun, a great egg, hatched from itself the earth and other planets.

No Use Wasting Time. Some people never stop to count the cost because they realize that they haven't got the price, anyway



"House of Pirates."

which he had been subjected. As there was no war between France and England at the time of his release, he obtained a privateer's commission under the Carthaginian government against Spain. I have seen this commission, which is still in existence, in Spanish, and held by relatives of his, near Brownsville. These relatives claim that his only acts of piracy were against British vessels—and he was beyond question a scourge to these. In 1807 he came to New Orleans, and in 1813-14 was at the head

of a community of freebooters in Barrataria bay, about 40 miles west of the mouth of the Mississippi. They had many small vessels and the bay afforded them a secure retreat. In 1814 Commodore Patterson attacked their town and destroyed it, but Lafitte and most of his men escaped, returning later on and resuming operations."

## TRICKS OF THE FAKERS

**Many Ingenious Ways Have Been Devised for Getting Money Without Working for It.**

It is really astonishing what a large number of people there are who will take infinite pains to avoid work, says the *London Globe*. And the queer part of it is that they really give themselves much trouble in their attempts to obtain a living without laboring at any fixed task."

Not long ago a novel trick was practiced by a man going about the streets of London, but it seems impossible to think that he made much out of it unless there are an abnormal number of exceedingly foolish people in existence. Passing a man casually he would glance at his back and say: "Beg your pardon, sir, but there's a lot of white stuff on your shoulders." Those who were particularly about their person appearance would thank the man and ask him to wipe it off, accompanying the request with a tip. Of course it is unnecessary to say that there never was anything white

on the back of the man addressed and that it was solely for the purpose of getting the tip that the kind working-man took an interest in the stranger's toilet."

A much more lucrative trick was reported by a London daily some time ago. According to this statement a well-dressed gentleman sauntered about the streets of Sydney, N. S. W., stopping a passer-by every now and then in order to ask him for a "fill" of tobacco, as he had left his pouch at home. Not many smokers would refuse such a request when made by a respectable stranger and would bid him fill his pipe and be welcome. As soon as the generous stranger was out of sight the borrower would transfer the tobacco from the pipe to a capacious pouch he carried. When he had collected a pound or two he would sell it to a tobacconist."

Another dodge worked on likely looking gentlemen is that well-worn device which might be termed the trick-pipe take. As the victim hurries along a crowded street he notices a man who is smoking a big meerschaum pipe. That is to say, he would notice him if he were looking,

but as he is in a hurry the chances are that he does not, and he is therefore surprised when he collides with the man, who lets the pipe fall to the ground, which breaks in several places. Of course the owner of the "valuable" pipe raises a great lamentation over his loss, and calls on heaven to witness the clumsiness of the victim. The former says that it is all the fault of the latter, and loudly demands compensation while tenderly picking up the pieces. He affects the proffered monetary solatium with the remark that the pipe was worth far more, and then goes up a side street to fix the "meerschaum" ready for some one else. This trick used to bring in quite a decent amount, but it has become so well known that it is seldom tried nowadays."

In Glasgow there used to be a respectable-looking old man who was reputed to make a living out of postage stamps. He frequented the better class of cheap lodging houses, and dressed neatly though poorly. He had a simple, but apparently very successful method of working. He was always writing in answer to advertisements; after having sent off sev-

eral letters he would hear of another place likely to suit him, so of course he applied for it at once."

Unfortunately, when the letter was written he found that he had no stamp, that he had used the last one, and that he had no money to buy another. If he delayed writing the situation would be filled, but if he wrote at once he would be sure to get the place. What hard lines! And he had been out of work for weeks and had now come to the end of his tether. Of course those who did not know him felt sorry for this unfortunate state of affairs and would give him a stamp or the price of one."

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CONCEALING WHISKY'S WORK.

How the Full Work of Intoxicants is Covered Up.

It is well known that very many calamities for which liquor is really responsible are attributed to other causes in the published accounts. The *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, in a recent article, exposes the various explanations which are commonly given in this connection. The *Dispatch* says:

"Apoplexy, heart disease, gastritis and pneumonia frequently appear on the death certificates to the Allegheny county morgue, but were the truth told, these deaths, in hundreds of cases, each year have been superinduced by alcohol."

"The mortuary records of the county during the past few years show that there has been a remarkably large number of deaths for which habitual intoxication was the primary or direct cause. Fatalities and tragedies in many cases may be attributed to the use of alcoholic drinks, and in nine cases out of every ten the persons who have committed suicide during the past decade in and about Pittsburgh were driven insane or rendered destitute and despondent by drink's curse."

"Death due to pneumonia is the cause often ascribed by physicians for the death of their patients. In order that the friends of the dead be not subjected to humiliation, the words 'superinduced by acute alcoholism' are frequently omitted from the certificate which is sent to the coroner."

"Pneumonia claims perhaps the larger share of drunkards. While under the influence of drink men subject themselves to exposure. While on a prolonged debauch they are careless about their dress, and have no regard for the condition of the weather, with the result that they contract severe colds, while the system is not in condition to fortify them against illness, and death follows."

"The old stereotyped phrase 'killed by a train' is used hundreds of times in a year by the *Pittsburgh* newspapers, and it is brought into daily use as a result of drunkenness. Investigation into the death of most persons killed while walking the railroad tracks has proved that the victims were under the influence of liquor."

"Records of the local hospitals show that 70 per cent. of the victims of accidents placed under their care are due to intoxication, and in 90 out of every 100 cases brought to the hospitals in patrol wagons Demon Alcohol has figured prominently."

"If any man or body of men in Pittsburgh thinks he is fully alive to the deplorable condition that have been wrought by alcohol and its kindred destroyers of life, homes and happiness, he is wrong."

"The whisky bottle is in evidence in most of the hovels in the districts inhabited by the families who are frequent applicants for aid at the office of the department of charities and correction."

"The liquor laws in Allegheny county are as stringent as in any other place in the United States, but notwithstanding this topers are multiplying, our prisons are filling up, and records of charitable institutions show that intemperance is flourishing, and nothing is being accomplished toward curing the drunkard."

Rockefeller Don't Drink.

At the tenth annual banquet of the Young Men's Bible class of the Fifth Avenue Baptist church, New York city, of which John D. Rockefeller, Jr., is the leader, ice water flowed freely, and Mr. Rockefeller told why he was a total abstainer. He said:

"To drink a glass of beer is not in itself more harmful than to eat some kind of indigestible food. The single action is not a sin, but it is the abuse that the first glass leads to that is the sin. I believe not only in temperance, but in total abstinence, and this for two reasons. First, because both my father and his father as well as my mother's father were strictly temperate; second, my mature judgment is that while there may be no harm in one glass, that one glass may lead on to more. Therefore, I say that one glass is one too many."

Beware of the New Drinks.

The *Minerva* (O.) News says: "A drink known as 'orange soda' and sold by an Ironton dealer, was analyzed and found to contain 2.25 per cent. of alcohol. The dealer was compelled to pay the Alkin tax. Neither orange nor soda entered into the combination. 'Pear cider' is another beverage which has caused much trouble. The state dairy and food department has unearthed numerous cases. The liquor trade has many pale beverages under fictitious names that it is ready to dress up for quibblers and plant on the shelf of a restaurant or a pharmacy. This is one of a long list."

Tippling Money as a Dower.

A marriage recently celebrated in Scotland has a curious story attached to it. The bride's father and mother, who have been abstainers for over 30 years, gave as a marriage dowry to their daughter the sum of £120. Every week since they became total abstainers the amount formerly spent in alcoholic liquor had been banked for the little one who caused her parents to take the pledge. The little girl had seen her father slightly inebriated and reproved him for it the next day. The parents have eschewed drink ever since."

The Apple Cure.

"For ten years," said a physician, "I have advocated apples as a cure for drunkenness. In that time I have tried the apple cure on some 40 or 50 drunkards, and my success has been most gratifying. Let any man afflicted with the love of drink eat three or more apples daily, and the horrible craving will gradually leave him. The cure will be greatly helped along if he smokes as little as possible."

